

REMARKS

Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-4, 6-11, 14-20, and 22-24 are currently pending, with claims 5, 12, 13, and 21 having previously been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter therein. In this Response Applicants cancel claim 17 without prejudice or disclaimer as being duplicative of claim 7, amend claims 1, 2, 4, 6 – 8, 10, 11, 14 – 16, 18 - 20 and 22 – 24, and add new claims 25 – 29. No new matter is introduced. Support for the amendments may be found, for example, with reference to Applicants' specification at page 7, line 20 – page 8, line 3 and page 14, line 24 through page 16, line 12.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claims 1 – 4, 6 – 11, 14 – 20 and 22 – 24 are rejected under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 as lacking enablement in the specification for the claimed “morphable wild symbol.” As claim 17 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, the rejections as to claim 17 are moot. In the interests of prosecution efficiency, Applicants amend claims 1, 2, 4, 6 – 8, 10, 11, 14 – 16, 18, 20 and 22 – 24 to eliminate the terms “morphable” and “non-morphable.”

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claims 1 – 4, 6 – 11, 14 – 16, 18 – 20 and 22 – 24 under the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 be withdrawn.

Objection to Drawings

The drawings are objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.183(a) as failing to show the morphing of a morphable wild symbol as claimed in the claims. As noted above, claims 1, 2, 4, 6 – 8, 10, 11, 14 – 16, 18, 20 and 22 – 24 to eliminate the terms “morphable” and “non-morphable.”

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. § 1.183(a) be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-4, 6, 8-11, 18-20, 22, and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bennett et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,419,579 (“Bennett”), in view of Inoue, U.S. Patent No. 6,942,572, (“Inoue”), Yoseloff et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,311,976, (“Yoseloff”), and Kaminkow, U.S. Patent No. 6,837,790 (“Kaminkow”). Claims 7, 14-17, and 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bennett in view of Inoue, Yoseloff, Kaminkow and Hamano, U.S. Patent No. 5,205,555 (“Hamano”). As claim 17 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, the rejections as to claim 17 is moot. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections of claims 1 – 4, 6 – 11, 14 – 16, 18 – 20 and 22 – 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

In amended independent claim 1, Applicants claim:

1. 1. (Currently amended): A game machine comprising:

a display module having multiple display areas, each capable of displaying various symbols including optionally a wild symbol, in a static display both in initial imagery at the start of a game and in final imagery at the end of said game, during the game the display module being capable of displaying changing symbols in each of said display areas;

an evaluation module that can recognize arrangements of said symbols in said static display including at least one of:

multiple win arrangements of symbols including said wild symbol, by which multiple wins are established; and

multiple win lines related to said multiple win arrangements of said symbols including said wild symbol, by which said multiple wins are established,

wherein said evaluation module recognizes and determines multiple wins based on a pre-determined combination of said symbols, in which at least one said wild symbol is included, arranged in such a way that said multiple wins are established by the shared inclusion of said at least one wild symbol in at least two of said multiple win arrangements of symbols;

wherein said evaluation module further recognizes and determines other wins; and

wherein said display module visually differentiates other wins from multiple wins that include a shared wild symbol, and uses a time interval to alternately change

said wild symbol shared in said multiple wins to distinguish from the other types of said symbols that established said multiple wins.

(Emphasis added).

A concept of the invention as recited in amended claim 1 resides in the recognition (by the evaluation module) of arrangements of symbols in the display areas including both normal win arrangements (“other wins”) and win arrangements of symbols in which at least one symbol is a wild symbol, and in which multiple win arrangements are established by the shared inclusion of the wild symbol. The game machine further includes a display mechanism for visually differentiating the other win arrangements (or multiple win lines related to the other win arrangements) from the normal win arrangements.

Bennett discloses a game machine with a “Die Walker” multiplier feature. When this feature is triggered, a die appears and is moved along a path to the positions of the symbols displayed in the window of the game machine. The die functions as a wild card symbol. When the die moves to a position in which a winning combination is formed with the other symbols in the window, the win meter increments and the player is paid a prize. Bennett fails to disclose an evaluation module that distinguishes between wins that do not include a wild symbol and multiple wins that do include a common wild symbol. The Examiner also acknowledges that Bennett fails to teach Applicant’s claimed display module that is operable to visually differentiate multiple winning arrangements, but suggests that this deficiency is overcome with the addition of Inoue.

Inoue discloses a game machine including fifteen reels arranged in five lines and three columns. When a winning position is displayed (a winning line, a winning block or a winning number of symbols), the symbols constituting the winning position are illuminated. Like Bennett, Inoue fails to disclose an evaluation module that distinguishes between wins that do not include a wild symbol and multiple wins that do include a common wild symbol. In addition, the Examiner acknowledges that the combination of Bennett and Inoue fail to teach Applicant’s claimed display module that uses a time interval to alternately change a displayed wild symbol in a win arrangement with other types of symbols that established the win arrangement. The Examiner, however, suggests that this deficiency is at least in part overcome with the addition of Yoseloff.

Yoseloff discloses a video game that provides wild symbols that morph into other game symbols within a given round of play to indicate one or more winning arrangements. In sharp contrast to Applicants' claimed game system, Yoseloff fails to disclose that the symbols morph on a continuing basis to be alternately displayed. In addition, Yoseloff fails to teach that an evaluation module distinguishes between wins that do not include a wild symbol and multiple wins that do include a common wild symbol.

With reference to claims 7, 14 – 16 and 23, the Examiner suggests that a “multiplication factor” is disclosed in Hamano.

Hamano discloses an electronic gaming machine including an operation value display 8 which is displayed separately from a multi-line symbol field 18, 19, 20, and displays information about a single line combination N1, N2, N3 together with a token bet N, multipliers W, Z and a point award P. Multipliers W, Z are determined as a function of one or more of a single line combination, a single reel value and the token bet. Hamano does not describe the use of a multiplier in a game employing a wild symbol. Thus, and in sharp contrast to Applicants' claimed game machine, Hamano fails to disclose a multiplication factor that is selected according to multiple win arrangements of the symbols as in claims 7, 14-16 and 23, but is selected instead according to a single winning combination or value. In addition, Hamano teaches away from Applicants' claimed display module that displays a multiplication factor in combination with a wild symbol and other alternately-displayed types of game symbols in a final imagery that indicates the multiple win arrangements. Applicants' claimed approach provides an advantage over the display 8 of Hamano by alerting directly the player to the multiple win arrangements and bonus awarded according to the multiplication factor directly on a single, multi-line playing field. This deficiency is not overcome with the addition of the other cited references.

Accordingly, for at least the above-argued reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claim 1 is not obvious in view of the cited references and stands in condition for allowance. As amended independent claims 2, 8, 18 and 24 each include the above-argued elements of allowable independent claim, Applicants submit that amended independent claims 2, 8, 18 and 24 are also allowable for at least these reasons. As claims 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 – 11, 14 – 16, 19, 20,

22 and 23 each depend from one of allowable independent claims 1, 2 and 8, Applicants submit that dependent claims 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 – 11, 14 – 16, 19, 20, 22 and 23 are also allowable for at least this reason.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of claims 1 – 4, 6 – 11, 14 – 16, 18 – 20 and 22 – 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn.

New Claims

Applicants add new claims 25 – 29. As each of new claims 25 – 29 depends from one of allowable claims 1, 2, 8, 18 and 24, Applicants submit that new claims 25 – 29 are also allowable for at least this reason.

CONCLUSION


In view of the foregoing, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below if the Examiner believes any issue can be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment.

It is believed that no fee is required for these submissions. Should the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office determine that additional fees are owed or that any refund is owed for this application, the Commissioner is hereby authorized and requested to charge the required fee(s) and/or credit the refund(s) owed to our Deposit Account No. 50-4570.

Dated: May 25, 2010

Respectfully submitted,

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